



DISCUSSION:

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), signed into law in September of 2014, established a new structure for managing California's groundwater resources at the local level by local agencies. The SGMA requires the formation of locally controlled Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) in the State's higher priority groundwater basins by June 30, 2017. Each GSA is then required to develop and implement a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) to meet the sustainability goals of the basin to ensure that it is operated within its sustainable yield without causing undesirable results. Failure to timely form a GSA and implement a GSP in a groundwater basin could result in the State Water Resources Control Board asserting its power to manage local groundwater resources. The deadlines to form the required GSAs and prepare the GSPs are June 30, 2017 and January 1, 2020 respectively.

On January 26, 2016, the Board of Supervisors directed Department staff to work to establish the County as party to all GSAs formed within Fresno County. Since then, the Department has taken an active role in coordinating and facilitating the formation of GSAs in the groundwater subbasins which the County overlies. To date, the County is party to 15 GSAs formed within Fresno County by either being part of the governing board, party to a GSA coordinating agreement, or serving as the exclusive GSA for portions of groundwater subbasins. Department activity associated with the GSA formations have included participating in various GSA committee meetings (technical and advisory), conducting outreach informational meetings to affected property owners, serving as staff support for GSA board of director meetings, and administering the County SGMA Committee meetings. Going forward, the Department will either be participating or taking the lead in the preparation of each Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) as well as participating in GSP implementation.

Since 2014, the Department has utilized existing staffing resources to implement the County's SGMA program to the extent necessary to form the required GSAs. A much greater effort will be required going forward to ensure that GSP preparation and implementation occurs. However, key members of the Department's SGMA team have left the County. The Department has evaluated various options for replacing these positions, including surveying neighboring jurisdictions and the SGMA positions recently added, and has concluded that there is need for a manager position focused on water and natural resource management coordination and implementation. As envisioned, a Water and Natural Resources Division would be created within the Department to implement SGMA and other related resources functions including Williamson Act and Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMRA) implementation. The Division would be staffed with a combination of existing Department positions and new positions proposed as part of the 2017-18 Department budget.

ATTACHMENTS INCLUDED AND/OR ON FILE:

Salary Resolution Amendment - Appendix "D"

CAO ANALYST:

John Hays